

Micah Coffin House
also known as Auld Lang Syne
or Captain Henry Coleman House
Broadway
Siasconset
Nantucket County
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-857

HABS
MASS
10-SCON
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

MICAH COFFIN HOUSE

known as Auld Lang Syne or Captain Henry Coleman House

HABS

MASS

10 SCON

2-

Location: Broadway (on west side), Siasconset, Massachusetts.

Present Owner: Sartain Smith

Present Occupant: None

Present Use: Not occupied

Brief Statement

of Significance: House is the oldest on the Siasconset Bank and considered oldest on Nantucket Island.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: First owned in the seventeenth century by Micah Coffin. From him the house passed down through his heirs to his great-grandson Captain Edward C. Joy. It was lived in for many years at the end of the eighteenth century by Captain Henry Coleman, when the house became known as the Captain Henry Coleman House. Lydia Coleman, daughter of Joseph Coleman who died of yellow fever at sea on the coast of Guinea in 1775, married Jonathan Upham who was living in the house in 1814 and died in 1822.

In 1912 the owners were the heirs of Gorham Coleman. In 1937 the house was purchased by Sartain Smith of Washington D. C.

(This data is incomplete, but all that has been found. The names of Upham, Gorham and particularly Coleman, appear often in the ownership of the house, sometimes as surnames and often as given names, viz. Gorham Coleman).

2. Date of erection: About 1675. (Abstract: The Evolution of Siasconset by R. B. Hussey, 1912). Henry Chandlee Forman in Underhill's Old Houses on 'Sconset Bank states that the older part of Auld Lang Syne was in place by about 1682, at least. He also writes that there is a possibility that this house was brought from an earlier fishing stage at Sesachacha, a mile and a half to the northward when, for some reason or another, there was "a drift of life to the southward."

3. Architect: Unknown
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: The evolution of the house is analyzed in the book Early Nantucket and Its Whale Houses by Henry Chandlee Forman (pp. 126 - 130). According to Forman, the original cottage consisted of a rectangular space approximately 14' by 19½', divided into three rooms, a "great room", and two chambers. The ridgepole is 13½' from the ground.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: See Forman, Early Nantucket and Its Whale Houses for four stages of development.

Auld Lang Syne is now very badly dilapidated.

- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: Siasconset was originally a fishing village.

The ancient structures on the Siasconset Bank in the beginning had but a single room -- a rude boarded enclosure used for shelter at night and in bad weather by the fishermen who came to them from Nantucket town to fish off-shore in 'Sconset. In time floors were laid, fireplaces were erected, windows put in, lean-tos were added, and the buildings gradually became the small cottages they are today.

In 1675 Micah Coffin used this building as his fishing headquarters. He employed several Indians to fish for him during the season, while he remained ashore to do the cooking.

- C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Drawing, "Captayne Henry Coleman, Hys House" in Sconsett: by Ye Sea by Underhill, 1886; drawing in Nantucket, the Far-Away Island by W. O. Stevens, 1936; photograph in The Evolution of Siasconset by R. B. Hussey, 1912; photograph in Underhill's Old Houses on 'Sconset Bank by Henry Chandlee Forman, ed., 1961.

2. Bibliography: (see also items listed under Old Views).

Forman, Henry Chandlee. Early Nantucket and Its Whale Houses. New York: Hastings House, 1966.

Hussey, R. B. The Evolution of Siasconset. Nantucket: Inquirer and Mirror Press, 1912.

Stevens, William Oliver. Nantucket, The Far-Away Island. New York: Dodd and Mead and Co., 1936.

Underhill, E. T. and Co. The Credible Chronicals of
the Patchwork Village, 'Sconset by the Sea. New
York, 1886.

Prepared by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin
Nantucket, Massachusetts
July, 1965

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Excellent example of early small-scale whaling houses on Nantucket, later used as summer vacation houses for Nantucket and off-island residents; one-story, shingled, wood-frame cottage; gable and lean-to roofs; brick chimney.
2. Condition of fabric: Poor.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 22' - 10½" by 31' - 11".
2. Foundations: Cobblestone.
3. Wall construction: Weathered wood shingles, corner boards, wood sheathing and frame.
4. Structural system: Post and lintel.
5. Chimney: Brick, two flues.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Vertical board doors, simple board trim.
 - b. Windows: All window openings boarded over or closed by one vertical board shutter per opening.
7. Roof:
 - a. Slope and covering: Gable and lean-to, asbestos shingles, ridge boards at gable, "up-and-down" sheathing parallels roof slope.
 - b. Framing: (Attic inaccessible).
 - c. Eaves: No overhang, barge boards, and board cornice.

8. Hardware: Strap iron hinges with round finials, cast iron pintles. Kitchen door has wrought-iron thumb latch.

9. Exterior decoration: None.

C. Description of the Interior:

The interior of this house was inaccessible at the time of survey.

D. Site and Surroundings:

Auld Lang Syne is located between Centre Street and Broadway east of Pump Square. The Betsey Cary Cottage, "Shanunga" (MASS-610) is to the north. Maple tree at west foundation wall, wood picket fence at east and south property lines, stone paving from opening in fence to east doorway. Macadam street surfacing.

Prepared by F. Blair Reeves, A.I.A.
HABS Nantucket
July, 1971

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared for the Historic American Buildings Survey project on Nantucket, Massachusetts. They are part of a continuing HABS comprehensive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Measured drawings made 1953, 1957, and drawn 1962 by H. Chandlee Forman, A.I.A., architect. Historical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Architectural information prepared by Professor F. Blair Reeves, A.I.A. (University of Florida). Photographs are by Cortlandt V. D. Hubbard of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Werner Ramirez, July, 1971.